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STATE FOR EAP, G/TIP, DRL/ILCSR
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TAGS: [ELAB](#) [PHUM](#) [ETRD](#) [KCRM](#) [RP](#)
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR LAUNCHES PROJECT TO COMBAT CHILD LABOR

REF: A. STATE 10273 (GSP Interim Demarche)

[1](#)B. 07 MANILA 3857 (2007 Child Labor Update)

[1](#)1. (SBU) SUMMARY: The Ambassador joined Philippine Labor and Employment Secretary Arturo Brion and other government and NGO leaders on February 7 to launch a \$5.5 million project funded by the U.S. Department of Labor to combat the worst forms of child labor and to improve child laborers' access to education. The project, led by the U.S.-based NGO World Vision, seeks to remove and prevent 30,000 children from engaging in dangerous and hazardous work, such as commercial sexual exploitation, mining and quarrying, and firecracker manufacturing. The Ambassador also delivered demarche to Secretary Brion on USG concerns about labor rights protection and the need for progress on investigating and prosecuting alleged extrajudicial killings, particularly those of labor leaders and activists (ref A). END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (U) On February 7, the Ambassador joined Labor and Employment Secretary Arturo Brion and World Vision Philippines Executive

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Director Elnora Avarientos to inaugurate a USG-funded project to support and enhance the Philippine government's efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. In September, the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) awarded a grant of \$5.5 million to a collective group of three NGOs - World Vision, Christian Children's Fund, and the Educational Research and Development Assistance Foundation. World Vision and the other NGOs will work closely with local government leaders, teachers, and parents in at-risk communities to raise awareness about the hazards of exploitative child labor and to help return many former child laborers to the classroom.

[1](#)3. (U) The four-year project seeks to remove 18,000 children and prevent another 12,000 from engaging in hazardous work in sugarcane plantations, domestic work, commercial sexual exploitation, mining and quarrying, garbage scavenging, and firecracker manufacturing. World Vision will build upon the partnerships and collaborative efforts of its previous USDOL-funded project, known as "the ABK Initiative," in which more than 31,000 children were removed or prevented from engaging in the worst forms of child labor from 2003 to 2007. The Philippine government estimates that as many as four million children aged 5 to 17 years are economically active; of these four million, 60 percent may be working in hazardous and dangerous environments.

[1](#)4. (U) The Ambassador commended the Departments of Education and Labor and Employment for their partnerships with NGOs both to remove children from the worst forms of child labor and to improve the educational opportunities for these children in at-risk communities. The event attracted a mix of print and broadcast media, leading to several articles in the major dailies that featured the Ambassador's remarks and information about the new grant. Post will forward

highlights of the press coverage, as well as a copy of the Ambassador's remarks, to the U.S. Department of Labor and EAP.

15. (SBU) The Ambassador also used the opportunity to raise with Secretary Brion USG concerns about labor rights protection and the

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alleged extrajudicial killings of labor leaders, as requested by the USG interagency committee reviewing the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) benefits for the Philippines (ref A). Secretary Brion, well aware of the ongoing GSP review in Washington, noted his commitment to resolving the matter and appreciated the USG's recommendations. Senior members of the Mission's country team will continue to raise these concerns with Philippine government officials at the Departments of Foreign Affairs, Justice, Interior and Local Government, Labor and Employment, and Trade and Investment. These meetings are ongoing and will be reported septel.

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